United Nations A/72/716

General Assembly

Distr.: General
25 January 2018

Original: English

**Seventy-second session**
Agenda item 136
**Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019**

# Standards of accommodation for air travel

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/272 B, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on standards of accommodation for air travel.

In response to the request by the General Assembly, and pursuant to the internal review of existing policies and procedures announced by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/492), a review of the Secretariat's current travel policy was conducted with a view to leveraging Umoja technologies and ensuring further simplification and streamlining.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of travel management in the Secretariat, the Secretary-General proposes: (a) simplifying the determination of the standards of accommodation for air travel; (b) ending the interim measure relating to home leave lump-sum travel to incentivize greater use of the cost-effective lump-sum option; and (c) eliminating the policy of providing for the first-class travel of Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General when they represent the Secretary-General.

18-01196 (E) 050218

Please recycle

# I. Introduction

1. The United Nations standards of accommodation for air travel are governed by a series of General Assembly resolutions and decisions, including resolutions 42/214, 45/248 A, 53/214, 63/268, 65/268, 67/254 A, 69/274 A and 71/272 B and decisions 44/442, 46/450 and 57/589. The Under-Secretary-General for Management promulgated the administrative instruction on official travel (ST/AI/2013/3, ST/AI/2013/3/Amend.1 and ST/AI/2013/3/Amend.2) for the purpose of implementing the various provisions of resolution 67/254 A relating to the standards of accommodation for air travel.

2. In response to the previous report of the Secretary-General on the standards of accommodation for air travel (A/71/741 and A/71/741/Corr.1), the General Assembly, in section VI of its resolution 71/272 B, requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report on standards of accommodation for air travel for consideration by the Assembly at the first part of its resumed seventy-second session.[1]

3. In response to the request of the General Assembly, and pursuant to the internal review of existing policies and procedures announced by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/492), a review of the Secretariat's current travel policy was conducted with a view to leveraging Umoja technologies and ensuring further simplification and streamlining. Accordingly, the present report includes a number of proposals to further rationalize and improve the existing Secretariat travel policy.

4. The experience gained since the issuance of the above-mentioned administrative instruction in 2013 has shown that the processes for determining the standards of accommodation for air travel and the most economical routing of flight itineraries are complex and not compatible with technical developments in the travel industry such as the move towards increased automation, including through the use of online booking tools.

5. It has also become evident that the interim changes made to the lump-sum option for a staff member's home leave travel, as set out in the administrative instruction, have resulted in a reduced rate of acceptance of that option and a corresponding increase in the number of requests made to the Secretariat for the purchase of tickets for such travel. Since the lump-sum option is more cost-effective for the Organization than the ticket option (which includes the total cost of the ticket, terminal expenses and shipment costs) alternatively available to staff, those changes have had a negative impact on total travel costs.

6. In order to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of travel management in the Secretariat, the Secretary-General therefore proposes: (a) a revised method for determining the standards of accommodation; (b) ending the interim measure relating to home leave lump-sum travel to incentivize greater use of the cost-effective lump-sum option; and (c) eliminating the policy of providing for the first-class travel of Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General when they represent the Secretary-General.

[1] In keeping with the biennial submission cycle for reports of the Secretary-General on this topic, it is anticipated that the next report will be submitted for consideration by the Assembly at the first part of its resumed seventy-third session and will include biennial information on air travel activities, including details regarding the exceptions to the standards of accommodation, which typically form part of these reports.

## II. Comprehensive information on air travel activities and the effects of the implementation of Umoja in travel administration

7. In his previous report (A/71/741), the Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly updated information on air travel activities as requested in section IV, paragraph 10, of its resolution 69/274 A, and comprehensive information on the effects of the implementation of Umoja in travel administration. The report also included updated information, trends and analysis in all areas relating to air travel in the United Nations, as requested in section IV, paragraph 14, of the resolution.

8. The provision of comprehensive information was made possible by, and was based on, data from the Umoja travel module that had been extracted through the business intelligence module and reflected the types and categories of travel as defined in Umoja.

9. For the purposes and the context of the present report, an interim update is presented below for the period from July 2016 to June 2017. The statistics presented also provide necessary context for the Secretary-General's proposals set out below aimed at further rationalizing and improving existing Secretariat travel policy.

10. At this stage, all travel across the Secretariat is processed through the Umoja travel module with the exception of the travel of personnel other than internationally recruited staff serving in peacekeeping missions (e.g., locally recruited staff, uniformed personnel, United Nations Volunteers and individual contractors), which will be included following the next planned expansion of the Umoja travel solution, in early 2018.

11. The Secretariat is making a transition from the static reporting of travel statistics to the active utilization of travel data to further improve travel processes and increase accountability. Examples include the performance analysis of subprocesses relating to travel to identify procedural bottlenecks, and the introduction of dashboards that make key travel management performance indicators more accessible to end users by translating travel data into a readily consumable management tool and presenting it in a visually enhanced manner (see the figure below for an example of the types of travel data that are available in the dashboard format). The latter initiative further supports the Secretary-General's objective of facilitating transparent and timely business intelligence reporting, monitoring and quality assurance for strengthened accountability. Further details are provided in the section below on the advance purchase policy directive.

**Screenshot of an example of the types of travel data available in the dashboard format**

### Travel volume, frequency and purpose

12. Table 1 provides an overview of the number of trips by commercial aircraft purchased by the United Nations, by Umoja travel category, for the period from July 2016 to June 2017.

Table 1
**Travel volume by Umoja travel category**

| *Umoja travel category*[a] | *Number of trips* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Official travel | 88 987 | 90 |
| Entitlement travel | 1 925 | 2 |
| Human resources travel | 5 281 | 5 |
| Uniformed personnel travel[b] | 2 304 | 2 |
| **Total** | **98 488** | **100** |

[a] See annex XIX to A/71/741 for a breakdown of travel types within each travel category. Note that the travel category previously referred to as "group travel" has been renamed "uniformed personnel travel" in Umoja.

[b] Refers to the travel of uniformed personnel administered by the former United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the former United Nations Mission in Colombia. Those were the only two field missions that processed the travel of uniformed personnel in Umoja during the period indicated.

### Class of air travel

13. Table 2 provides an overview of the number of trips by commercial aircraft purchased by the United Nations, by standard of accommodation, for the period from July 2016 to June 2017.

Table 2
**Travel volume by standard of accommodation**

| *Standard of accommodation* | *Number of trips* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| Economy class | 82 592 | 84 |
| Business class | 12 776 | 13 |
| First class | 51 | <1 |
| Multiple classes of service | 3 069 | 3 |
| **Total** | **98 488** | **100** |

### Travel cost

14. A breakdown of travel cost by Umoja travel category for the period from July 2016 to June 2017 is presented in table 3. The figures provided include all modes of travel, including non-commercial aircraft such as United Nations aircraft, train, motor vehicle, etc. The figures are extracted from the financial module, which does not contain data on modes of travel, which would allow for the isolation of trips by commercial aircraft.

Table 3
**Travel cost by Umoja travel category**
(Thousands of United States dollars)

| | *Total* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Travel category* | *Ticket* | *Other* | *Total* |
| Official travel | 123 756 | 143 216 | 266 973 |
| Entitlement travel | 3 273 | 30 975 | 34 248 |
| Human resources travel | 12 081 | 2 908 | 14 989 |
| Uniformed personnel travel | 2 562 | 316 | 2 878 |
| **Total** | **141 673** | **177 428** | **319 101** |

15. Costs are broken down into "ticket" costs and "other" costs. The "other" category includes all non-ticket expenses, such as daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses.

### Advance purchase policy performance

16. The Secretariat continues to monitor trends in the travel industry with regard to the advance purchase of tickets and maintains the view, consistent with the industry, that in general the advance purchase of airline tickets yields savings for the Organization. While it is acknowledged that the efficacy of an advance purchase policy varies according to route, market and standard of accommodation, an analysis of travel data for 2016 carried out at Headquarters showed that savings had been maximized when tickets had been purchased 14 to 20 days in advance of departure. The Secretariat's advance purchase policy states that travel arrangements "should be finalized 16 calendar days in advance of commencement of official travel".

17. The Secretariat has recently taken various steps to improve the advance purchase of tickets. First, a business intelligence report has been made available to all departments, offices and field missions, enabling them to monitor and analyse policy performance. In addition to overall advance purchase statistics, the report

includes details on the submission performance of travellers and travel administrators (measured against the 21-day submission target) and on the processing times of approvers in the travel process (measured against the 5-day approval target), with approvers being human resources partners (for human resources and entitlement travel), travel and shipment approvers (certifying officers) and travel-processing offices.

18. With the insights provided by this business intelligence reporting, departments, offices and field missions are able to identify bottlenecks in the travel administration process and take targeted steps, as necessary, to further improve the advance purchase of tickets. This is yet another good example of the leveraging by the Secretariat of Umoja capabilities to improve policy performance. As a next step, the business intelligence is being converted into an online dashboard that provides an improved, visually illustrative presentation of advance purchase statistics for end users.

19. The advance purchase of tickets is increasingly being added as a key performance indicator in departmental performance reporting. In the past at Headquarters, it was part of the performance reporting of the Travel and Transportation Section, but not of individual departments, although departments have the greatest impact on this indicator. It is expected that the increased departmental awareness resulting from the addition of the indicator will lead to an increase in the number of tickets purchased in a timely manner.

20. Table 4 provides an overview of the number of trips by commercial aircraft purchased by the United Nations, by travel category, and advance ticket purchase performance for the period from July 2016 to June 2017 across the Secretariat. The table also indicates the average number of days in advance that the trips were submitted for approval, as well as the average number of days taken to approve the trips.

Table 4
**Advance purchase policy performance, by travel category**

| | | | *Average time (in days)*[a] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Travel category* | *Number of trips* | *Performance (percentage)* | *Submission* | *Human resources partner* | *Travel and shipment approver* | *Travel-processing office* |
| Official travel | 88 978 | 32 | 15.8 | N/A | 2.2 | 1.9 |
| Entitlement travel | 1 925 | 43 | 32.9 | 7.2 | 2.9 | 4.1 |
| Human resources travel | 5 281 | 26 | 17.5 | 3.9 | 2.0 | 3.2 |
| Uniformed personnel travel | 2 304 | 14 | 16.6 | N/A | 1.0 | 3.7 |
| **Total (weighted average)** | **98 488** | **31** | **16.2** | **N/A** | **2.2** | **2.0** |

*Abbreviation*: N/A, not applicable.

[a] All average times presented in the overall "total" row are weighted in consideration of the relative number of trips made in each travel category. Weighted averages are used to account for the large variance in the travel volumes associated with each travel category and the difference in workflow steps for entitlement and human resources travel (i.e., the inclusion of a human resources partner approval step).

21. The overall performance for the period was 31 per cent. The steps taken to improve the internal approval process, including the above-mentioned report and targets, have proved to be positive: the average travel request is now approved within the five-day approval target.

22. The greatest potential for the further improvement of performance lies in the earlier submission of travel requests by the traveller/travel administrator. The target

for submission is 21 days in advance of the trip start date, yet travel requests were submitted only 16.2 days in advance on average. Better planning at the departmental level remains key to achieving significant improvements.

23. To allow for a comparison of the advance ticket purchase performance achieved in the Secretariat with the performance of other organizations, reference is made to annex XXIII to the previous report of the Secretary-General, which sets out industry benchmarks from organizations belonging to the Inter-Agency Travel Network. While it is acknowledged that the emergency response nature of many departments, offices and field missions of the Secretariat necessitates travel on short notice, the insights gained from the new business intelligence report and other advanced data analysis have given the Secretariat the tools to strengthen advance ticket purchase performance.

**Use of alternative methods for mandate implementation**

24. The General Assembly, in its resolution 69/274 A, requested the Secretary-General to hold managers accountable for the judicious use of travel resources, in particular by encouraging the use of alternative methods of communication and representation.

25. Table 5 provides an overview of the number of videoconferences organized by the Broadcast and Conference Support Section at Headquarters over the past five years.

Table 5
**Use of videoconferencing by the Broadcast and Conference Support Section at Headquarters**
(Number of videoconferences)

| *2012* | *2013* | *2014* | *2015* | *2016* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 318 | 2 507 | 4 963 | 4 219 | 4 645 |

26. Table 6 provides an overview of the number of meetings held using un.webex.com and Unite Communications at Headquarters and offices away from Headquarters over the past five years.

Table 6
**Use of alternative methods for holding meetings**
(Number of meetings)

| *2012* | *2013* | *2014* | *2015* | *2016* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 773 | 2 659 | 3 019 | 6 011 | 9 485 |

27. The use of alternative methods increased significantly over the five-year period: the use of videoconferences more than tripled, and the use of WebEx meetings increased more than fivefold. Other technologies, such as instant messaging (e.g., Skype), are also widely used. It is expected that this growth will continue, with new technology being implemented (e.g., Skype for Business and Jabber) and staff becoming increasingly familiar with these technologies and their benefits.

## III. Summary of standards of accommodation, and challenges to the processing of United Nations travel

28. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly decided that, for official travellers below the level of Assistant Secretary-General, the standard of accommodation for air travel would be business class if a single-leg journey was 9

hours or more and would be business class for a multi-leg journey if the combined travel time of the journey was 11 hours or more, including a maximum of 2 hours of connection time, provided that the journey to the next destination resumed within 12 hours. The Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to modify his administrative instructions on standards of accommodation for air travel so that the duration of a journey would be determined on the basis of the most economical route available, provided that the total additional time of the whole journey did not exceed the most direct route by four hours. In addition, the Assembly endorsed, subject to the provisions of the resolution, the conclusions and recommendations contained in the reports of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on proposals for more effective and efficient utilization of resources for air travel (A/66/739) and on standards of accommodation for air travel (A/67/636), which included establishing economy class as the standard of accommodation for air travel for consultants and individual contractors, unless determined otherwise by the Secretary-General taking into account the circumstances of the traveller (e.g., health reasons and the interests of the Organization). In this regard, the Under-Secretary-General for Management promulgated the administrative instruction on official travel (ST/AI/2013/3, ST/AI/2013/3/Amend.1 and ST/AI/2013/3/Amend.2), which incorporated the decisions of the Assembly.

29. Table 7 provides a high-level summary of the standards of accommodation in place for the various types of United Nations travellers/categories of United Nations travel.

Table 7
**Summary of standards of accommodation applicable to types of United Nations travellers/categories of United Nations travel**

| *Traveller type* | *Traveller subtype* | *Travel category* | *Standard of accommodation* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff | Deputy Secretary-General (and eligible family members) | All | First class | |
| | Under-Secretary-General, Assistant Secretary-General (and eligible family members) | All | Business class | When representing the Secretary-General: first class |
| | Below Assistant Secretary-General level (and eligible family members) | – All official business (except travel for training, medical and security evacuations) | Economy class, if under 9 hours (direct)/11 hours (indirect); | |
| | | – Human resources travel (e.g., appointment, assignment, separation, etc.) | Business class, if above those thresholds | |
| | | – Official business travel for training, medical and security evacuations | Economy class | |

| *Traveller type* | *Traveller subtype* | *Travel category* | *Standard of accommodation* | *Notes* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | — Entitlement travel (e.g., home leave, family visit) | | |
| Secretary-General (and eligible family members) | | All | First class | |
| President of the General Assembly | | All | First class | |
| Other authorized United Nations travellers who are not staff members | All[a] | All | Economy class | |

[a] Standard of accommodation for the air travel of members of organs and/or subsidiary organs, committees, councils and commissions of the United Nations shall be based on the provisions of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/107/Rev.6, or as superseded.

30. Economy class remains the predominant standard of accommodation for air travel purchased by the United Nations. As shown in table 2, business class represented only 13 per cent of the total volume of travel by commercial aircraft for the period from July 2016 to June 2017.

**Challenges in applying the current travel policy**

31. Two important elements of travel policy are the determination of the appropriate standard of accommodation and the determination of the most economical route.

32. In order to determine the appropriate standard of accommodation, the travel unit and/or travel agency must manually factor many elements into the calculation. These include traveller category, grade level, specific provisions that may apply, travel type and purpose, and flight times.

33. In order to determine the most economical route, one must then determine the total duration of travel by the most direct route and the total duration of travel by available alternatives, and limit the list of alternatives to those that have a total duration of up to four hours longer than the most direct route.

34. Over the four years since the implementation of the new travel policy, experience has shown that the determination of the standard of accommodation and the most economical option is very labour-intensive and creates operational implementation challenges, including the inability to further automate the process (i.e., through the use of online booking tools), owing to the following requirements:

(a) The dual threshold (9/11 hours) for determining the standard of accommodation;

(b) The maximum of two hours of connection time;

(c) The provision that the total additional time of the whole journey should not exceed the most direct route by four hours.

35. Those provisions are not supported by airline ticketing systems or online booking tools. Thus, it is not possible to utilize readily available flight data from global distribution systems for the determination of the appropriate standard of

accommodation; instead, it is necessary to make manual adjustments to such data in order to book trips in compliance with the current travel policy.

36. This affects the Secretariat in two ways. First, it negatively affects the efficiency of the overall travel process, since manual calculations need to be made by travel units and by the contracted travel agencies. Second, it prevents further automation of United Nations travel processes, including the use of, and integration with, the online booking tools used in the travel industry.

37. Another practical implication of the provision allowing for a total of four hours of additional travel time is the fact that, for certain "city pairs",[2] in particular those involving a relatively short flight time, the four-hour window can result in a more than doubling of the total travel time. With respect to the third-most-selected city pair for staff below the Assistant Secretary-General level, which is Geneva to Brussels, the most direct round-trip options on Brussels Airlines or EasyJet have a duration of 2 hours and 30 minutes. However, the indirect option on Swiss International Air Lines with a stopover in Zurich has a total duration of 6 hours and 20 minutes and is considered compliant with policy, if less costly, but would result in a considerable loss of a staff member's productivity and time.

**Online booking tools**

38. As noted above, the complexity inherent in the United Nations travel policy prevents the further automation of travel processes, which also hinders more widespread use of online booking tools. Increasing the adoption of online booking tools would not only lead to improved process efficiency, but also increase client satisfaction, as they provide the convenience of a self-service solution and empower travellers by enabling them to manage their own travel.

39. In order to provide the General Assembly with a comprehensive update regarding online booking tools, the Secretariat collected information on such tools from the Inter-Agency Travel Network and the Travel Services Benchmarking Network in September 2017.[3]

40. In recent years, online booking tools have become the standard in the travel industry. In response to a request for information from the Inter-Agency Travel Network, information was obtained from a total of 19 organizations. Of those organizations, seven

[2] In commercial aviation, a "city pair" is defined as a pair of departure (origin) and arrival (destination) airports on a flight itinerary.

[3] The Secretariat continues to monitor best practices in all areas of travel, including through participation in two travel management networks: the Inter-Agency Travel Network and the Travel Services Benchmarking Network. The Inter-Agency Travel Network is a technical working group composed of travel managers from 75 international organizations such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Criminal Court, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Labour Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the International Criminal Police Organization, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization, the World Bank and the United Nations Secretariat. The Travel Services Benchmarking Network is an industry group composed of travel managers from 15 organizations (almost exclusively from the private sector), namely, ABB, Allstate, Boeing, Dell, Johnson and Johnson, Merck, Microsoft, RELX, Siemens, United Technologies Corporation, Dow, Honeywell, Rio Tinto, the World Bank and the United Nations Secretariat.

(40 per cent) now have online booking tools in place. Many of those seven organizations recently introduced the tools in question. On average, these organizations process more than half of all trips through the online booking tool platform.

41. Typically, the private sector is an earlier adopter of new technologies than the public sector. The same is true in the case of online booking tools. The level of their adoption is thus higher among the private-sector organizations that belong to the Travel Services Benchmarking Network, with all 15 of them (100 per cent) having implemented online booking tools. In addition, the average uptake of online booking tools is much higher among those organizations, with more than 90 per cent of eligible trips booked through the online platform.

42. As noted above, the benefits of online booking tools include an improved traveller experience and a more efficient and timely approval process. The tools can also be configured to display only those flights that comply with policy, so that travellers can immediately see, and select, policy-compliant flights during the creation of the travel request. In addition, approvers are assured that the most economical option has been selected, which reduces the need to manually determine this. A faster and more efficient approval process would also have a positive impact in terms of adherence to the advance purchase policy.

43. Currently, online booking tools cannot be programmed to implement all aspects of the United Nations travel policy, owing to its many complexities and to the manual adjustments that must be made to flight data. The Travel and Transportation Section has worked closely with leading providers of online booking tools to determine which aspects of the current travel policy can be supported by such tools and which aspects the tools are not able to support.

44. As previously noted, online booking tools cannot be programmed to implement the current, dual threshold for the standard of accommodation (they can be programmed to implement only a single threshold), the maximum two-hour connection time (they can process either the actual flight time(s) plus the actual stopover time(s), or the actual flight time(s) only, without taking stopover time(s) into account) or the four-hour total additional travel time provision (they can process only the most direct or the most economical option, without taking into account any additional factors, such as how the additional travel time of the most economical option compares with the most direct option).

45. In time, it is expected that online booking tools can be closely integrated with the Umoja travel module, which would yield further efficiencies. An integrated online booking tool would streamline the approval process and more closely align the United Nations travel process with the process used by many entities, in which, after approval by management, a travel request is submitted directly to the travel agency for provision of the ticket in line with the entity's travel policy. Such a change would enable travel-processing offices to focus on more value-added tasks such as complex travel/multi-destination arrangements, the performance management of travel agency contracts, the negotiation of airline discount agreements, the provision of reporting and analysis on travel topics, and the provision of training and support to travellers, travel administrators, human resources partners and travel and shipment approvers (certifying officers) across the Secretariat.

46. The prerequisite for a more efficient travel process, facilitated by greater use of online booking tools, is the simplification of the current travel policy.

# IV. Proposals to improve United Nations travel policy

47. The Secretary-General presents the following proposals to simplify and streamline the current travel policy.

48. The proposals concern:

(a) Simplifying the determination of the standards of accommodation;

(b) Ending the interim measure relating to home leave lump-sum travel to incentivize greater use of the lump-sum option;

(c) Eliminating the policy allowing for the first-class travel of Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General when they represent the Secretary-General.

### Simplify the determination of the standards of accommodation

49. As noted above, determining the appropriate standard of accommodation for any traveller is a complex exercise and limits the possibilities for the streamlining and automation of the process. Accordingly, the Secretary-General proposes simplifying the determination of the standards of accommodation by replacing the current, dual-threshold model with a single-threshold, total-travel-time model.

50. It should be noted that this proposal would affect only those travellers and travel categories/types that are currently subject to the dual threshold. The determination of the standards of accommodation for other travel categories/travel types, such as entitlement travel for staff below the level of Assistant Secretary-General (i.e., economy-class travel), would remain unchanged.

51. The single-threshold concept would replace the dual threshold of 9 hours (direct flights)/11 hours (indirect flights). Participants in any missions requiring a travel time below the single threshold (direct or indirect flights) would travel in economy class; participants in any missions requiring a travel time above the single threshold (direct or indirect flights) would travel in business class.

52. The concept of travel time would also be changed from that reflected in the current policy. It would be based on "total travel time", which would consist of actual flight time and actual stopover time (without the maximum two-hour connection time specified in current policy).

53. The single-threshold, total-travel-time model would be significantly less complicated to implement, since manual adjustments to readily available flight data would no longer be required, thus allowing for much faster and accurate processing of travel requests. In fact, the proposed model would enable the Secretariat to further streamline the process and automate the selection of flights through an online booking tool, thus enabling the Organization to more fully utilize current technology and benefit from the resulting efficiencies.

54. In determining the duration (in hours) of the single threshold of total travel time to be adopted, the General Assembly may be guided by the assessment regarding the United Nations standard of accommodation provided by the Secretary-General in his previous report. In this regard, responses from a total of 13 organizations belonging to the Inter-Agency Travel Network indicated that the average threshold for public sector organizations for business-class travel was 6.4 hours of travel time, with the minimum being 3 hours and the maximum 9 hours. The responses received from organizations belonging to the Travel Services Benchmarking Network indicated that the organizations had a similar threshold for business-class travel: the average was 6.8 hours of travel time, with the minimum being 5 hours and the maximum 12 hours.

**End the interim measure relating to home leave lump-sum travel to incentivize greater use of the lump-sum option**

55. In its resolution 67/254 A, the General Assembly decided that the Secretary-General should, as an interim measure pending the outcome of the review to be concluded in 2015, revise the provision for determining the travel-related lump-sum payment from 75 per cent to 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy-class fare, and requested the Secretary-General to perform an analysis of the impact of the implementation of the provision and to make further proposals on modifying the lump-sum scheme.

56. As detailed in his previous report, the Secretary-General provided an initial analysis demonstrating that, on average, the use of the lump-sum option represented a cost reduction of 21 per cent per traveller compared with the total costs of the ticket option (in which the organization covers the cost of the ticket, terminal expenses and shipment costs) alternatively available to staff, as shown in table 8.

Table 8
**Analysis of the lump-sum option versus the ticket option**

(Thousands of United States dollars)

| | *Lump sum paid* | *Total costs of ticket option (ticket, terminal expenses and shipment costs)* | *Difference between lump-sum option and ticket option* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average per traveller | 2 019 | 2 560 | (541) |

57. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in paragraph 23 of its report on standards of accommodation for air travel of 23 February 2015 (A/69/787), made the recommendation, endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/274 A, that wider use by staff of the lump-sum option be encouraged. The preliminary analysis contained in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (A/71/741 and A/71/741/Corr.1) showed that the rate of acceptance of the lump-sum payment option had decreased from the previously reported 93 per cent to 74 per cent since the implementation of the interim measure. The remaining 26 per cent of staff had opted for the provision of tickets and related benefits, which is a costlier option for the Organization.

58. This decreasing trend can be attributed to two main factors: (a) the reduction, under the lump-sum option, from the previous 75 per cent to 70 per cent of the least restrictive economy-class fare, which has reduced the attractiveness of the option from a financial perspective; and (b) the removal of compensation for travel days under the lump-sum option. The loss of compensation for travel days is often cited by staff who opt for the ticket option as the main reason for doing so. In fact, the provision of a lump sum, regardless of the percentage at which it is set, is understood to compensate for the financial costs of the home leave entitlement, including airline ticket, terminal expenses, excess baggage and shipment, which would otherwise be paid directly by the Organization, but does not compensate for the loss of travel time, which is now experienced by staff members who have chosen the lump-sum option in exercising that entitlement. That is the reason that this change in the lump-sum provision has made the lump sum option less attractive to many.

59. A lump-sum option for the home leave entitlement, which is a benefit throughout the common system, is established by each organization. Therefore, it is important that the United Nations ensure harmonization of the implementation of benefits and allowances set by the International Civil Service Commission. In this regard, the interim measure currently implemented by the Secretariat is less favourable than the lump-sum options offered by many other international organizations.

60. A final analysis and related proposals on modifying the lump-sum scheme will be submitted to the General Assembly at the first part of its resumed seventy-third session. Until that time, the Secretary-General proposes that the interim measure implemented pursuant to resolution 67/254 A be ended, in order to further incentivize lump-sum acceptance and reduce costs for the Organization.

**Eliminate the policy allowing for the first-class travel of Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General when they represent the Secretary-General**

61. Under the current travel policy, Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General designated to represent the Secretary-General on ceremonial occasions or to undertake missions in the exercise of the good offices of the Secretary-General under the Charter of the United Nations or resolutions of the General Assembly or the Security Council may, with the Secretary-General's approval, be provided with first-class travel accommodation, irrespective of the duration of the flight involved. Having concluded the review of all travel policies, the Secretary-General proposes that, when Under-Secretaries-General or Assistant Secretaries-General undertake official travel to represent the Secretary-General, the standard of accommodation utilized be the standard applicable to Under-Secretaries-General or Assistant Secretaries-General (the class immediately below first class) without any exception.

62. Consistent with the Secretary-General's reform initiative, this recommendation would further simplify and support automation in the processing of travel for this category of traveller by removing the consideration of a trip's purpose, thereby effectively establishing only one standard of accommodation for Under-Secretaries-General and Assistant Secretaries-General (the class immediately below first class).

## V. Conclusion

63. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 67/254 A, the current administrative instruction on official travel was promulgated in 2013. In the light of the experience gained since, it has become apparent that the processes for determining the standards of accommodation and the most economical option for air travel are less than optimal and not fully supportive of technical developments in the travel industry, such as the use of online booking tools.

64. On the basis of those lessons learned, and in the context of his recent report entitled "Shifting the management paradigm in the United Nations: ensuring a better future for all" (A/72/492), the Secretary-General makes the following proposals to further simplify and improve the existing Secretariat travel policy: (a) a revised model for the determination of the standard of accommodation based on a single-threshold, total-travel-time model; (b) ending the interim measure relating to home leave lump-sum travel to incentivize greater use of a cost-effective lump-sum option; and (c) eliminating the policy allowing for the first-class travel of Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General when they represent the Secretary-General.

65. **The General Assembly is requested to endorse the following proposals to improve the United Nations travel policy:**

(a) **Adopt a single-threshold, total-travel-time model for the determination of a traveller's standard of accommodation for air travel;**

(b) **End the interim measure relating to home leave lump-sum travel to incentivize greater use of the lump-sum option;**

(c) **Eliminate the policy allowing for the first-class travel of Assistant Secretaries-General and Under-Secretaries-General when they represent the Secretary-General.**

United Nations A/72/717–S/2018/65

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
25 January 2018

Original: English

**General Assembly**
**Seventy-second session**
Agenda items 28 (a) and 68 (a)

**Advancement of women: advancement of women**

**Promotion and protection of the rights of children: promotion and protection of the rights of children**

**Security Council**
**Seventy-third year**

## Letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to submit to you herewith the report on the workshop entitled "Children and armed conflict and women and peace and security: leading to change — closing the implementation gap", convened by the Federal Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany on 20 and 21 April 2017 in Berlin (see annex). The report reflects the views of the workshop participants.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 28 (a) and 68 (a), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Christoph **Heusgen**
Permanent Representative of the
Federal Republic of Germany to the United Nations

18-01217 (E) 060218

Please recycle

## Annex to the letter dated 22 December 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

### Report on the workshop entitled "Children and armed conflict and women and peace and security: leading to change — closing the implementation gap"

#### Executive summary

1. On 20 and 21 April 2017, the German Foreign Office convened a workshop in Berlin focusing on the subject "Children and armed conflict and Women and peace and security: leading to change — closing the implementation gap". The workshop brought together members of the Security Council, members of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict and the Group of Friends on Women and Peace and Security and staff of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, field practitioners and policy experts from the United Nations system and regional organizations (the African Union, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)).

2. The workshop built on previous initiatives and provided a platform for the discussion of recent developments relating to the normative framework of the children and armed conflict agenda and the women and peace and security agenda and their ability to inform and mutually reinforce each other. It explored how regional organizations implement the agendas at the policy and field levels and how cooperation between the two can be further strengthened. One thematic session covered blind spots in international responses to sexual violence. Another session focused on the emerging issue of conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys.

3. The proliferation and complexity of conflicts that are marked by diminishing respect for human rights and international humanitarian law and accompanied by a lack of resources and shrinking space for civil society were identified as factors that posed challenges to the effective implementation of both agendas.

4. New concerns have arisen with regard to both agendas. In addition, a set of emerging issues that remain outside the conceptual frameworks of both agendas demand responses.

#### Child protection

5. The need to include communities in responses to child protection issues was emphasized. The specific vulnerability of adolescent girls was highlighted, as was the need to integrate age- and gender-specific responses to children. The importance of taking vulnerability and gender-inclusivity into account was highlighted. There was a consensus that the protection of children affected by armed conflict is a shared responsibility, to be strengthened in deeper partnerships with local, subregional, regional and international actors and organizations.

6. A key outcome centred on the need for increased cooperation and information-sharing between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations to ensure that child protection is considered in planning, policy and training. As an example, working in tandem with international child protection actors and the Government of Afghanistan, the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan has set in motion a system for documenting grave violations against children and bringing them to the attention of the Government in an effort to promote accountability. A broader cross-regional approach is also needed to better protect people on the move, and the

discourse needs to move beyond gender binaries to include the vulnerabilities of all at-risk populations.

**Women and peace and security**

7. Despite efforts and good intent, the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda remains patchy across all its core principles. Chronic underfunding, continued resistance to bringing women to the negotiating table and the inability to systematically implement the agenda in the operational strategies of national and regional organizations were identified as key deterrents to effective implementation.

**Emerging issues and blind spots**

8. The workshop identified blind spots in current United Nations programmes. First, there is a need to respond to the stigma faced by children who are born as a result of sexual violence in a conflict and to the violence faced by the children of refugees fleeing a conflict. Second, the issue of sexual violence against men and boys remains unaddressed within the current United Nations framework. This encourages impunity for sexual violence against men and leads to a lack of access to remedies and reparations for male survivors. Sexual violence is often conflated with violence against women and girls. The risk that male victims will remain invisible and left out of responses is significant unless their rights and concerns are given a specific focus. It was considered important that different forms of sexual violence be addressed. National laws need to take into account the broader dimensions of sexual violence and criminalize such violence against all victims, regardless of their sex. There was consensus that greater monitoring and reporting and more data are needed to close the implementation gap and that it is necessary to include the issue of sexual violence against men and boys in the architecture of the United Nations. It should also be addressed by the Security Council or the Human Rights Council.

**Key recommendations**

9. On the basis of discussions held during the two days of the workshop, the following key recommendations were developed:

(a) Better coordination of the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda with regard to protection: (a) establish better synergies between the two agendas, for example, joint investigation plans and trend analysis; (b) ensure that the use of information on sexual violence is consistent between the reports on children and armed conflict and on women and peace and security; (c) improve strategic and day-to-day interaction between actors working on the women and peace and security agenda and those working on the children and armed conflict agenda at the policy level, but also in missions, when engaging with State and non-State actors, and improve training within United Nations missions on both agendas; (d) improve cooperation with local actors and with regional actors, namely, OSCE, the African Union, NATO and the European Union; and (e) improve responses to sexual exploitation, as that will have a direct impact on efforts to address sexual violence;

(b) Integrate components on women and peace and security and on children and armed conflict into peace processes: gender equality and children's rights and child protection provisions need to be core components of peace processes, and strong leadership is required. Women should be present at the negotiating table, and further strengthening of local women's leadership, such as through the African mediators network, should be supported. Women are actors in peace processes, not just victims in need of protection. Experts on the area of children and armed conflict should also be included in negotiation teams and their role expanded. Tools such as advisers on

women and peace and security and on children and armed conflict are required to more effectively operationalize mandates;

(c) Ensure justice for victims and accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law from all parties to conflict, including armed groups, as well as accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations and international staff;

(d) Raise the implementation of action plans on children and armed conflict in interactions with concerned Governments in political dialogues, démarches and cooperation programmes. Elements for implementation include the creation of child protection units in the military, the criminalization of the recruitment and use of children in national legislation and the establishment and implementation of age verification mechanisms in the military;

(e) Systematically integrate child protection into predeployment training and training missions as well as into military doctrine and operational planning and conduct;

(f) Ensure that regional and subregional organizations strengthen child protection through improved information-sharing and cooperation with existing United Nations mechanisms, and integrate child protection considerations into their policies, operational planning and personnel training;

(g) Ensure that budget cuts in peacekeeping and political operations do not have an impact on the effective fulfilment of mandates for the protection of children and women;

(h) The United Nations and regional organizations should integrate a gender perspective and child protection concerns into all phases and aspects of conflict prevention, early warning, analysis and planning, mediation, peacebuilding and the conduct and review of political and military operations and missions;

(i) The United Nations should increase the referencing of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council and integrate concerns relating to that agenda when considering crisis situations and emerging threats (include specific language related to women and peace and security issues in Security Council mandates, institutionalize briefings by civil society pursuant to Council resolution 2242 (2015) in New York and in field missions, mandate that all reports contain analysis regarding the differentiated impact of conflict on women, and incorporate women and peace and security elements into the terms of reference of commissions of inquiry and the designation criteria for sanctions regimes);

(j) Recognize and respond to blind spots such as children born as a result of rape, children of refugees, vulnerabilities due to sexual orientation and gender identity and, finally, the issue of sexual violence against men and boys;

(k) Put measures in place to serve children born as a result of rape by addressing their legal status and the social stigma against them;

(l) Consider creative ways to work with non-State actors on child protection and gender perspectives, including extremist groups by addressing legal obstacles and political and operational challenges;

(m) Examine ways to monitor and share information on and coordinate responses to the cross-border dimensions of trafficking in order to overcome the United Nations country-specific approach;

(n) Acknowledge and respond to the issue of sexual violence against boys and men in situations of armed conflict and displacement, through support for legislative, policy and programmatic change.

**Detailed report on the individual sessions of the workshop**

**Old challenges — new opportunities? Updates on the status of the children and armed conflict agenda and the women and peace and security agenda**

10. Discussions in the first workshop session centred on current concerns and initiatives relating to both the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda, highlighting commonalities, such as their shared focus on protection, but also core differences, such as the aim within the women and peace and security agenda of enhancing women's agency in political processes. It was noted that, despite the robust framework set up by the Security Council, both agendas suffer from an implementation gap. A two-step approach to address that gap in both agendas was discussed:

(a) Broaden the focus from a thematic approach to include a geographical approach in which implementation is assessed and planned for on the basis of specific country results, for example the progress of the children and armed conflict agenda in Colombia or the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda in Yemen;

(b) Security Council members must work on these issues in a united manner. Participants highlighted the important role of civil society and local communities in implementing the agendas with regard to policy development, information-sharing, monitoring and advocacy, and pointed to the requirement for inter-agency cooperation.

**Children and armed conflict**

11. Participants concurred that the complexity and multiplicity of conflicts and the reactive nature of the Security Council's response has posed serious challenges to the implementation of the two agendas. The situation in the Syrian Arab Republic remains a key concern. In addition, new global challenges such as trafficking and the efforts by Governments to counter violent extremism have serious implications for the protection of children in armed conflicts.

Five areas were identified with respect to improving the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda:

(a) *Action plan implementation*. Elements of action plan implementation need to be raised by Member States (and also by embassies in the respective countries), by the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, which functions as an important forum for ensuring joint advocacy, and by regional organizations in their interactions with concerned Governments in their cooperation programmes, political dialogues or other démarches. This includes, but is not limited to, the creation of child protection units in the military, the criminalization of the recruitment and use of children in national legislation and the establishment and implementation of age verification procedures in the military;

(b) *Monitoring and reporting mechanism*. The effectiveness of the monitoring and reporting mechanism established under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should be upheld, in particular through the provision of sufficient human and financial resources to ensure the systematic gathering of accurate, timely and objective information on the six grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict;

(c) *Peace processes*. Child protection provisions should be included in negotiations and in ceasefire and peace agreements. Experts on children and armed conflict should be included in negotiation teams and their role expanded;

(d) *Bilateral and regional military interventions*. Military deployments bring a wide range of child protection challenges to the fore. At the same time, they offer an opportunity for Member States and regional organizations to mainstream child protection into their military operations. Child protection should be systematically integrated into predeployment training (the Department of Peacekeeping Operations offers predeployment training to its troops; NATO provides online courses on children and armed conflict) and training missions led by Member States and regional organizations, as well as into military doctrine and operational planning and conduct;

(e) *Security Council mandates and reports*. Ensure that all Security Council mandates include specific language related to children and armed conflict issues and that reports contain analysis regarding the impact of conflict on children.

**Women and peace and security**

12. The involvement of women is known to have a discernible impact by lowering complaints of misconduct and the use of force and weapons. A statistic from 2016 from the Security Council showed that 88 per cent of Council reports contain some reference to women and peace and security and that there is a clear relationship between mandates, gender expertise and information and analysis. The sensitivity of the Council to women and peace and security has increased and, in specific countries, reference to the women and peace and security agenda has been made: in 2016, 56 per cent of crisis documents included a reference to women and peace and security, whereas in 2015 the figure was only 38 per cent.

13. It was stressed that women and peace and security concerns should be discussed in the consideration of crisis situations and emerging threats. The following recommendations were provided to increase the referencing of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council:

(a) Ensure that all Security Council mandates include specific language related to women and peace and security issues;

(b) Mandate that all reports contain analysis regarding the differentiated impact of conflict on women;

(c) Incorporate women and peace and security elements into the terms of reference of commissions of inquiry and the designation criteria for sanctions regimes;

(d) Institutionalize briefings by civil society pursuant to Council resolution 2242 (2015) in New York and in field missions;

(e) Ensure that all field missions fully incorporate women and peace and security components into their terms of reference;

(f) Call for justice and accountability for all perpetrators of grave human rights violations from all parties to a conflict and from armed groups, as well as accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations and international staff.

14. Participants drew attention to the issue of budgetary shortfalls in relation to women and peace and security: according to the figures presented, only 2 per cent of aid on peace and security is targeted at gender equality, and only a few of the 64 national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) have been allocated a budget.

**Improving protection against sexual violence and addressing its impact**

15. A presentation on Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), which prioritizes the fight against human trafficking for sexual exploitation, was the starting point for the second session, followed by the identification of trends and challenges regarding sexual violence in conflict, such as dealing with non-State actors, stigma and various groups of survivors.

16. Resolution 2331 (2016) responds to trafficking from the perspective of international criminal law and sexual violence from the perspective of humanitarian law. The resolution paves the way for more systematic monitoring and reporting, enhanced information-sharing and judicial cooperation.

17. It was noted that sexual violence and the trafficking and sale of women and girls were part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, including in situations such as those in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Mali, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen. Resolution 2331 (2016) responded to that phenomenon and addressed the nexus between trafficking, sexual violence, terrorism and transnational organized crime, but the resolution still faces an implementation gap.

18. One challenge is how to deal with non-State actors. Among the parties listed in the Secretary-General's report of 2017 on conflict-related sexual violence, 11 of 46 parties are State actors; the rest are non-State actors. Given that commitments on addressing conflict-related sexual violence have been signed with many of the State actors, there is a need to focus more on engaging non-State actors and, in doing so, address the operational as well as political challenges that that entails, such as legitimacy.

19. Sexual violence against internally displaced persons and refugees is another challenge that needs a tailored response. The focus must be broadened in order to consider sexual violence not only in camp settings but at every stage of the displacement cycle: as a driver of displacement; during flight, when most incidents are reported; and in camps and urban settlements in which internally displaced persons and refugees seek refuge. It is, therefore, particularly important that all refugee-receiving countries adopt measures to mitigate the risk of sexual violence, to make services available to survivors and to provide them with the option of documenting their cases for future accountability processes. Furthermore, Member States are encouraged to recognize conflict-related sexual violence as a form of persecution that may serve as grounds for asylum or refugee status.

20. Subsequent presentations flagged the absence of data on internally displaced persons as a factor that inhibits comprehensive responses, since vulnerabilities exist at every stage of the displacement process. The lack of safe routes for those seeking asylum was also identified as an important contributor to trafficking and sexual violence, as refugees are forced to use illegal pathways. Displacement causes changes in social behaviours, which give rise to tensions and sexual violence.

21. An area that needs further attention is the situation of children born as a result of rape. In situations such as that in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as in current settings such as Iraq, consideration needs to be given to clarifying the legal status of undocumented refugee children, including children conceived as a result of rape, and the right of mothers to confer their nationality upon their children in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This is necessary to prevent possible statelessness. Since stigmatization is transferred from women to children, responses need to include not only women survivors, but also their families and children.

22. The above-mentioned report on conflict-related sexual violence takes a new look at the issue of stigma. The report underpins the debate, but stigma should be regarded as a persistent long-term problem that must be addressed. Stigma kills. The manifestation of stigma can lead to honour crimes, suicides (e.g., in the Middle East and North Africa region), unsafe abortions, economic exclusion and indigence. Stigma is handled as an immediate protection issue rather than a long-term issue. The Security Council could put an increased focus on this issue and could encourage Member States to move the stigma from the victim to the perpetrator. These dimensions need to be considered in responding to conflict-related sexual violence through programmatic interventions.

23. The following recommendations to prevent sexual violence and improve victim support were provided from the perspective of international humanitarian law and human rights law: (a) strengthen respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law in order to prevent displacement; (b) improve access for and engagement by humanitarian actors with regard to armed groups in order to encourage them to accept protection; (c) facilitate substantive engagement with victims to understand their views and needs; (d) remind Governments of their obligation to investigate sexual violence allegations; and (e) apply a do-no-harm approach when working with survivors and mainstream sexual violence risk prevention throughout programme implementation.

24. With regard to reparations, it was noted that further doctrinal development is not necessary, but practical delivery is. The United Nations has provided robust principles for the delivery of reparations and remedies in its Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law (2005), and the Secretary-General issued a guidance note specifically on delivering reparations for conflict-related sexual violence in 2014. The United Nations should work through entities such as the Land, Property and Reparations Division of the International Organization for Migration to deliver reparations to survivors. Donors should make reparations for victims a priority.

25. The discussion covered issues concerning the relevance of HIV to both female and male survivors and the duplication of trauma for sexual violence survivors who have had to live with HIV that was contracted through sexual violence. It was recognized that a broader cross-regional approach was needed to better protect people on the move. Finally, the discourse had to go beyond gender binaries in order to include the vulnerabilities of at-risk transgender populations. Another topic of discussion focused on accountability and justice as relevant tools for preventing sexual violence. However, there remain significant challenges in moving forward, owing primarily to the lack of capacity of expert groups to provide the right information to the sanctions committees. While a project has begun to profile perpetrators in order to obtain more information on the chain of command and territories of operation with regard to Security Council resolution 2331 (2016), that information can be linked to sanctions lists. The economic costs of sexual violence need to be highlighted to promote greater buy-in on the part of Governments. Overall, the information gap on sexual violence was discussed as an important barrier to the implementation of the protection agenda.

**Mainstreaming the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda at the policy level of the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, NATO and OSCE: lessons from the policy and field levels**

26. The third and fourth sessions tackled strategies and experiences in implementing the agendas at the policy and field levels of the United Nations and regional

organizations such as the African Union, the European Union, NATO and OSCE, and participants discussed ways to strengthen cooperation.

27. Numerous OSCE decisions deal with trafficking in human beings, since that issue concerns all OSCE participating States. Protecting women in armed conflict, including by adopting national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), remains a priority for OSCE participating States. One thematic focus is the role of women in (countering) violent extremism. Strengthening partnerships at the international level through cooperation with the United Nations and with regional organizations on the ground is integrated into OSCE working methods. Field missions are extremely useful in supporting the monitoring of ceasefire agreements. However, a need to increase the focus on child protection in OSCE working areas and improve cooperation with other organizations at the national and international levels was identified.

28. Over the past few years, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has strengthened the protection of children affected by armed conflict. In 2009, the Department issued a policy on the mainstreaming of the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict within United Nations peacekeeping operations. The policy provided guidance on how to ensure that child protection concerns were mainstreamed at the strategic and operational levels of the work of peacekeeping operations. In 2017, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations issued an updated policy jointly with the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support. The new policy on child protection in United Nations peace operations builds on the lessons learned since the launch of the 2009 policy. It provides guidance on critical child protection concerns, including the detention of children by peacekeepers and the treatment of children captured during military operations by national armed forces. It also prohibits the military use of schools, the use of child labour, and the sexual exploitation and abuse of children by United Nations peace operations personnel, all of which undermine the ability of peacekeepers and the United Nations to credibly and effectively protect children in conflict situations.

29. NATO has created the position of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Women, Peace and Security and has developed policies and directives for both the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda. With the recognition that contemporary warfare creates significant risks for children, NATO, in 2016, adopted a policy framework that includes standard operating procedures focused on training and education. The framework outlines a system of close cooperation with the United Nations. Afghanistan remains a key focus for NATO in the coming years, as the agency has deployed its first child protection adviser to the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. For the Resolute Support Mission, the implementation of the NATO policy on children and armed conflict remains an ongoing priority. Progress has been demonstrated by the Government of Afghanistan in implementing the United Nations action plan and the related road map, through a presidential decree criminalizing underage recruitment by the Afghan National Security Forces, which entered into force in February 2015, and the endorsement of age assessment guidelines to prevent child recruitment. In partnership with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Resolute Support Mission is supporting the Ministry of Defence of Afghanistan in developing a child protection policy that will provide, inter alia, clear guidance on handling cases of child recruitment within the ranks of the Afghan National Army and on the treatment of children recovered from non-State armed groups. The policy will also provide clear guidance on the military use of schools and provide the Government with operational tools to assist its implementation of obligations from the signing of the Safe Schools Declaration. After productive consultations with the United Nations, standard

operating procedure 307 was adopted by NATO. The procedure mandates the Resolute Support Mission to establish its own information-sharing mechanism on children and armed conflict. The mechanism will collect information on the six grave violations against children in armed conflict, in a similar way to the monitoring and reporting mechanism mandated under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and implemented by the United Nations country team. Information collected on incidents relating to children and armed conflict that qualify as gross violations of human rights is transmitted to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence for prosecution through the Attorney General's Office and through military courts, respectively. Those existing processes provide an opportunity to combine a reporting and information-sharing mechanism on children and armed conflict with a mechanism that enhances accountability.

30. The women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda are being prioritized and, as a result, play a crucial role in the European Union, although there is room for improvement in their implementation. The European Union acknowledges the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda as two separate agendas that are interrelated in parts. Within the European Union, gender and human rights advisers are combined in posts, but there is increasing understanding that the two need to be bifurcated to improve implementation. While a clear recognition of children and armed conflict and gender/women and peace and security exists within the European Union and is backed by strong leadership commitment, that does not guarantee effective implementation. Effective structures, procedures and instruments need to be implemented, and it is essential to integrate a gender perspective, as well as child protection concerns, into all phases and aspects of organization, from conflict prevention, early warning, analysis and planning to mediation, peacebuilding and the conduct and review of operations and missions. Key challenges include ensuring that the content and substance of training are relevant and useful, mitigating the potential loss in institutional knowledge due to rapid staff turnover and the comprehensive implementation of the women and peace and security agenda, including issues concerning sexual exploitation and abuse.

31. The African Union has prioritized women and peace and security in a number of ways, including the adoption of several documents on women's rights since 2003 and the appointment of a special envoy for women and peace and security, whose mandate includes advocacy, bridging policy gaps, enhancing partnerships and building synergies within the African Union. As an example, the African Women Leaders Network focuses on transformative leadership and generates positive competition between countries. The African Union had also developed a strong framework for the protection of women and conducts campaigns against sexual violence in Nigeria and South Sudan. For the African Union, it is of crucial importance that women be more involved in peace processes, which can be accomplished by bringing together existing women's groups to express their voice and supporting strong women leaders. Weak support and funding of women's organizations remains a challenge for the African Union. Often, the ministries for women's affairs are the least funded. A participant noted that, while 19 African States have national action plans that include the role of women, none of them make any reference to the role of children.

32. Participants from NGOs presented and discussed their experiences of good practices but also of gaps and challenges in implementing the agendas in the field. The reintegration of girls formerly associated with armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was identified as a challenge, where assistance programmes do not adequately address community and family rejection and stigmatization. In Yemen, women still play a subordinate role in the peace and security process,

notwithstanding the fact that the country's current Constitution sets a 30 per cent quota for women's participation. Yemen does not have a national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and laws in Yemen do not contain specific provisions to protect women from gender-based violence. It was also noted that the gender-based violence cluster is underfunded. Groups in Yemen recommend improvements in monitoring, judicial systems and access to information as steps towards increasing compliance with women and peace and security objectives.

33. During discussions, participants identified broader challenges to the implementation of the women and peace and security agenda and the children and armed conflict agenda, in particular, the lack of resources and growing political resistance, diminishing respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, and shrinking space for civil society.

**Emerging topic: sexual and gender-based violence against boys and men in conflict**

34. The introductory section of the session laid out how sexual and gender-based violence against boys and men is often a blind spot in international responses, owing to associated taboos. The scale of sexual violence against males in conflict remains unknown, since systematic or baseline data and trends in relation to locations, frequency and specific types of sexual violence against men and boys are not available. The dearth of systematic data and the absence of a coordinated response to sexual violence against males leads to impunity for such violence, a lack of access to remedies and reparations for male survivors, limited programmatic responses to male sexual violence survivors, and a lack of gender inclusivity in the global discourse on gender-based violence, resulting in little or no acknowledgement of male victimization, including on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

35. At the international level, the term "violence against women and girls" is well defined in United Nations resolutions, treaties, general comments and consensus documents. However, there has yet to be a United Nations human rights mechanism that explicitly condemns sexual violence against men and boys. Sexual violence responses also currently fail to address the needs of those who suffer violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

36. The data from a study on conflict-related sexual violence against males in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sri Lanka was presented. Issues common in both cases include a lack of documentation and reliable numbers; sexual violence against males in detention sites; a lack of effective protection for victims and witnesses; and a lack of dedicated experience and weak legal frameworks for responding to sexual violence against men.

37. One presentation stressed a link between sexual violence against men and boys and preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. It was highlighted that sexual violence stems from abuse of power against vulnerable and defenceless populations, and addressing HIV/AIDS requires ending violence against all genders. The link between AIDS and sexual violence consists of four elements: physical, social, emotional and psychological damage. However, sexual violence against boys is still a blind spot. It is downplayed in modern HIV studies, overlooked in HIV funding proposals, omitted by the national strategic plans on HIV, excluded from service delivery and stigmatized by countries, since raped boys and men often do not talk about it. There is an assumption that males cannot be victims of sexual violence. Gender-based violence is currently defined as violence against women, which ignores male rape.

38. Health providers do not look for sexual trauma in males, as they are not trained to do so. It is simply not on their radar. Male victims often do not come forward,

owing to stigma and shame, among other things. Furthermore, laws are not inclusive. A more gender-sensitive approach is needed that works towards eliminating gender bias and providing treatment, community response and access to safe, non-traumatizing justice.

39. Five case studies, from Libya, the southern Sahara, the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq, Afghanistan and Greece, showed that sexual violence against men and boys was pervasive and was still a blind spot. While types of sexual and gender-based violence vary, they have a common root: the power differential between the perpetrator and the victim, irrespective of whether the victim is female or male. This involves rape as a weapon of war, rape as torture, sexual exploitation, the persecution of gay, transgender and intersex persons, sex trafficking, hazing in the military, sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and harmful traditional practices. The preamble and article 3 of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 provide for the protection of refugees without discrimination. That is particularly important today when young male refugees are endangered. For example, 97 per cent of unaccompanied and separate children arriving in Greece are males who often come from Pakistan and Afghanistan. These boys are vulnerable and at great risk of sexual violence.

40. The discussion brought to the fore increased attention on sexual violence against men and boys in situations of conflict, albeit with careful and strategic consideration. Some key steps include the sensitization of field missions to sexual violence against boys and men, bearing in mind that the gender-based violence sector is already the most chronically underfunded. It was also noted that the European Union has prioritized the issue of sexual violence against men and boys. There was consensus that greater monitoring and reporting and more data are needed to fill the implementation gap, and it is necessary to include the issue in the architecture of the United Nations, with the help of the Security Council, or in the Human Rights Council.